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BONAPARTE'S PROPOSED LOUISIANA EXPEDITION

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BONAPARTE'S PROPOSED LOUISIANA EXPEDITION

THERE has been so much conjecture as to Bonaparte's intentions with regard to Louisiana that every shred of positive evidence about his plans is of extreme value in explaining this phase of his colonial policy. Nothing indicates his genuine intention to take possession of the Colony more clearly than the expedition which he equipped in Holland for that purpose. Although much of the material of this chapter, therefore, may concern itself with military and naval history, its consideration is necessary in order to explain the diplomatic background of the years 1802-03. It was due to the activity in Holland that Bonaparte insisted so seriously on the formal delivery of Louisiana by Spain.

There is a superficial resemblance between the expedition to Louisiana and the army later assembled at Boulogne for the invasion of England. As neither ever embarked for its destination, it has been contended that in both cases the First Consul was playing a rôle of intimidation. In any event, there can be no question of his serious purpose to take possession of Louisiana. There are several hundred dispatches relative to the expedition; the will of Napoleon is distinctly discernible behind the mass of cor-

respondence of the ministers, and a personal order of the First Consul occasionally modified or reversed a ministerial plan.

Several other expedients had been considered before it was finally decided to gather the troops in Holland under the command of General Victor. As early as 1801, even before the Peace of Amiens, Bonaparte thought of sending troops to Louisiana. He proposed to give the command to General Collot,¹ a Frenchman who had lived for some time in America and whose survey of lines of communication, for Minister Adet,² had been of service to the French Government. But as Collot's departure at the head of the expedition would have betrayed its destination, he was to go to the West Indies before joining the forces in Louisiana. This plan, however, was never executed, but an effort was made to send troops to Louisiana about the time Leclerc sailed for St. Domingo. On October 14, 1801, the Minister of War ordered General Augereau, then in command in Holland, to assemble a force at Flushing for Louisiana.³ Two weeks later the troops were at Flushing ready to embark,⁴ and General d'Himisdal was appointed to command them.⁵ Lack of transports kept the expedition from sailing, however, and nothing more was said of d'Himisdal as a possible military governor of the Colony.

Some months later, in offering General Bernadotte the command of an expedition to Guadeloupe, Bonaparte

1. To Forfait, 29 Pluviôse, An IX [Feb. 18, 1801], *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier* (32 vols. Paris, 1856-69), VII, 45.

2. F. J. Turner, "The Policy of France Toward the Mississippi Valley in the Period of Washington and Adams," *American Historical Review*, X (1905), 272.

3. Archives de la Guerre, Colonies d'Amérique 1792-1804. These archives will be cited hereafter as AG.

4. General Victor to the Minister of War, Oct. 28, 1801, *ibid.*

5. Minister of War to General Victor, Nov. 2, 1801, *ibid.*

spoke of the island as "a position from which one could depart for taking possession of Louisiana."⁶ Although Bernadotte did not accept the offer, it was rumored later that he would be Captain General of Louisiana.⁷ As late as May 28, 1802, Livingston thought Bernadotte had accepted and that Collot would be second in command.⁸

A month before, however, General Victor had been nominated.⁹ His appointment marked the end of half-hearted measures. Napoleon disclosed his plans in regard to Louisiana in a letter to Decrès on June 4, 1802:

*"My intention, Citizen Minister, is that we take possession of Louisiana with the shortest possible delay, that this expedition be organized in the greatest secrecy, and that it have the appearance of being directed on St. Domingo. The troops that I intend for it being on the Scheldt, I should like them to depart from Antwerp or Flushing. Finally, I should like you to let me know the number of men you think it necessary to send, both infantry and artillery, and that you present me a project of organization for this Colony, for the army as well as for the civil authority, and for the fortifications and batteries we should have to construct there in order to have a roadstead and some men-of-war sheltered from superior forces. In this regard, I should like you to have made for me a map of the coast from St. Augustine and Florida to Mexico and also a geographical description of the different cantons of Louisiana with the population and resources of each canton."*¹⁰

6. To Joseph Bonaparte, 17 Nivôse, An X [Jan. 7, 1802], *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, VII, 457-58.

7. Livingston to Madison, April 24, 1803, *Annals of Congress 1802-1803* (Washington, 1851), pp. 1026-1027.

8. Livingston to Madison, May 28, 1802, *ibid.*, pp. 1032-33.

9. To General Victor, April 27, 1802, in Léonce de Brotonne, *Dernières lettres inédites de Napoléon Ier* (Paris, 1898), p. 19.

10. To Decrès, 15 Prairial, An X [June 4, 1802], *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, VII, 617-18.

Decrès, the Minister of the Navy and Colonies, was one of Bonaparte's most ardent supporters in his North American projects. His attachment to the colonial policy was so great that he was to dare to oppose the sale of Louisiana when Napoleon asked his advice in April, 1803. In the summer of 1802, he made haste to execute the First Consul's orders, which were so largely in accord with his own wishes. He requested Talleyrand to secure information from Spain regarding her administration of the Colony,¹¹ and numerous letters passed between the two Ministers on the subject. Among other things, the Minister of the Navy was very anxious to retain the Spanish troops in the Colony under French pay until complete military occupation could be accomplished.¹²

It is not clear what the attitude of the French Government would have been toward Spain had one of these earlier expeditions actually set sail, before Charles IV had consented to the formal delivery of the Colony. There could hardly have been any idea of taking Louisiana by force, as has been alleged,¹³ for the French delayed their preparations until they received assurance that Charles IV would issue the necessary orders. Only in the summer of 1802, after Cevallos, as we have seen,¹⁴ promised St. Cyr that the territory would be delivered to France, did the expedition receive increased and definitive attention. Napoleon wrote to Victor: "You can count on the expedition's being ready in the first days of Fructidor."¹⁵

11. Talleyrand to Decrès, 10 Messidor, An X [June 29, 1802] and Talleyrand to St. Cyr, 10 Messidor, An X [June 29, 1802], AAE, L. et F., VII.

12. Decrès to Talleyrand, 3 Thermidor, An X [July 22, 1802], *ibid.*

13. Frederick Austin Ogg, *The Opening of the Mississippi* (New York, 1904), p. 482.

14. E. Wilson Lyon, *Louisiana in French Diplomacy, 1759-1804* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1934), pp. 123-25.

15. To General Victor, 9 Messidor, An X [June 28, 1802], in Léonce de Brotonne, *op. cit.*, No. 43; the month of Fructidor in the Revolutionary calendar began on August 19.

Dunkirk was chosen as the place of embarkation, and during August, the Ministers of War and of the Navy co-operated in equipping the troops. Decrès wrote to Berthier, then Minister of War, that he had given the necessary orders for the transport of 3,000 troops to America and that the boats should be ready to receive them the first week in October.¹⁶ Following Bonaparte's orders,¹⁷ Berthier directed the concentration of a corps of troops at Dunkirk.¹⁸ But profiting by the experience of the failure at Flushing, he forbade their movement until the boats could be ready. There is no evidence that the soldiers destined for the expedition ever arrived at Dunkirk. One of the greatest difficulties was undoubtedly the question of adequate transport facilities. Despite Decrès's assurances in his correspondence with Berthier, he admitted in the course of a long report on the Louisiana expedition that he had transportation facilities for only 2,400 men.¹⁹ Equally serious was the delay of the Spanish Government in delivering the royal order authorizing the French to receive the Colony, and the Madrid Ministry had also withheld any information regarding the military situation of Louisiana.²⁰ In view of the uncertainty of departure, Decrès hesitated to give the order for final preparation until he was assured that all obstacles had been removed.²¹

16. Decrès to Berthier, Aug. 14, 1802, AG., Colonies d'Amérique 1792-1804.

17. To General Berthier, 6 Fructidor, An X [Aug. 24, 1802], *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, VIII, 5.

18. Berthier to General Dejeu, Directeur-Ministre de l'Administration de la Guerre, 10 Fructidor, An X [Aug. 28, 1802], AG, Colonies d'Amérique 1792-1804.

19. Rapport au Premier Consul, 22 Fructidor, An X [Sept. 9, 1802], Archives Nationales, CF^{13A} 51 Colonies. Hereafter these archives will be cited as AN.

20. Talleyrand to Azara, 10 Vendémiaire, An XI [Oct. 2, 1802], AAE, L. et F., VII; Azara to Talleyrand, Oct. 3, 1802, *ibid.*

21. Decrès to Talleyrand, 24 Vendémiaire, An XI [Oct. 16, 1802], *ibid.*

In the meanwhile, the military and civil organization of Louisiana had been decided upon by the Consuls of the Republic.²² The chief military officer was given the title Captain General and an annual salary of 70,000 francs. The list of civil officers is comprehensive and leaves no doubt as to the seriousness of Bonaparte's ambitions for Louisiana. Pierre-Clément Laussat was appointed colonial prefect with a salary of 50,000 francs.²³ Those delegated to serve under him were a chief justice, a sub-prefect for Upper Louisiana, an administrative commissioner, an inspection commissioner, a director of estates, two surveyors, a director of customs, a paymaster-general, two stewards, and a botanical gardener.

The royal order from Spain for the delivery of Louisiana arrived in Paris on October 25, 1802,²⁴ and it seemed that every obstacle to occupation had been removed. The Dunkirk project was abandoned, and Victor was informed that the troops were to sail from Helvoët Sluys, a small port some thirty kilometers southwest of Rotterdam.²⁵ The expedition was expected to depart between November 22-27. This date, like the previously fixed sailings, proved impossible, for the supplies had to be conveyed from Dunkirk, where they had been deposited earlier in the autumn.²⁶ However, Decrès wrote to Victor on November 29, 1802, that the expedition was ready to leave Helvoët Sluys and ordered him to quit Paris and to take command. "The First Consul has ordered me to warn you

22. Consular decrees, 2 Vendémiaire, An XI [Sept. 24, 1802], AN, CF^{13A} 51 Colonies.

23. Decree of the First Consul, 17 Vendémiaire, An XI [Oct. 9, 1802], *ibid.*

24. Azara to Cevallos, Oct. 26, 1802, AHN, Est. 5207, Corr. Dip., Francia, 1802.

25. The Director of Colonial Administration to General Victor, 13 Brumaire, An XI [Nov. 4, 1802], AN, CF^{13A} 51 Colonies.

26. Rapport, 25 Brumaire, An XI [Nov. 16, 1802], *ibid.*

that he desires you to depart without delay," he stated.²⁷ The following day Victor received a long dispatch ordering him to Helvoët Sluys and explaining what had been done.²⁸ A sum of 881,631.85 francs was being sent to Louisiana. The necessary maps were ready at the general depot of the navy, and Victor was cautioned to handle them with the greatest care and to preserve them in the government archives.

"You will also find joined herewith the secret instructions that the First Consul has ordered me to deliver to you," Decrès added in his own hand to this dispatch. These instructions were the embodiment of Bonaparte's Louisiana policy.²⁹ After defining the boundaries in so far as they were known, they reviewed the history of foreign rights on the Mississippi. Victor was to make no changes in the navigation agreements he found in force. While maintaining a friendly attitude toward the United States, he was to observe carefully the inhabitants of the western states, and the question of defense was to occupy his attention at all times.

"The intention of the First Consul is to give Louisiana a degree of strength which will permit him to abandon it without fear in time of war, so that its enemies may be forced to the greatest sacrifices merely in attempting an attack on it," the instructions stated.

The protestations of friendship for the United States were incompatible with Victor's instructions to win the support of the Indians. "The western Americans must be

27. Decrès to Victor, 8 Frimaire, An XI, *ibid.*

28. Decrès to Victor, 9 Frimaire, An XI [Nov. 30, 1802], Archives des Colonies, Colonies Correspondance An XI, No. 42. Hereafter these archives will be referred to as, AC, No. 42.

29. "Instructions secrètes pour le Capitaine-Général de la Louisiane approuvées par le Premier Consul le 5 Frimaire, An XI [Nov. 26, 1802], AN, CF^{13A} 51 Colonies; quoted in J. A. Robertson, *Louisiana Under Spain, France, and the United States, 1785-1807* (Cleveland, 1911), I, 361-74.

fortified against also by alliances with the Indian nations scattered on the east side of the river. The Chickasaws, Choctaws, Alibamons, Creeks, etc., are represented as being entirely devoted to us," the instructions continued. The Captain General was to favor the natives, but was not to do anything that would establish a quarrel with the United States. Such a policy would have resulted in strained relations with the Federal Republic, for Victor could not protect the Indians in their raids without coming into conflict with the government of the United States in whose territory these Indians lived.

The Captain General was given the means of executing his orders, as the expedition was to carry adequate presents for all the Indians in the territories along the Mississippi. The authorities prepared the gifts on the advice of an interpreter, Fournereau, who for forty years had been an agent among the Indians.³⁰ The figures of the list are a cold but accurate commentary on what would have been the fate of the western American settlements had French possession of Louisiana become a reality.³¹ In addition to these presents, 200 medals were struck for the chiefs. Decrès forwarded them to Victor on February 15, 1803.³² They bore the effigy of Bonaparte and on the reverse side the words "à la fidélité."

Victor left for Helvoët Sluys in obedience to his instructions, but he did not find the expedition ready to sail, as

30. Baron Marc Villiers du Terrage, *Les dernières années de la Louisiane française* (Paris, 1905), p. 379.

31. "Etat d'approvisionnement des Présents d'usage aux Nations Indiennes ou Sauvages qui auront des rapports avec le Gouvernement français établi à la Nouvelle Orléans," AN, CF 13A 51 Colonies. (Villiers du Terrage, *op. cit.*, p. 379, quotes part of the list.) The presents were: 4,000 trading muskets, painted in yellow with some black flowers and a ferocious beast on the butt end; 1,000 (superior) muskets for the chiefs; 150 carabines; 20,000 pounds of powder; 25,000 gun flints; 10,000 ramrods; 10,000 briquets; 5,000 pickaxes; 1,000 sabres; 5,000 tomahawks; 3,000 trading razors; 10,000 woolen strips; 1,000 muslin shirts for the chiefs; 500 coats of Carcassonne blue cloth, with red collars and cuffs; 500 black handkerchiefs, etc., etc.

32. Decrès to Victor, 26 Pluviôse, An XI [Feb. 15, 1803], AC, No. 42.

the steady drain of troops for St. Domingo required all the transports at Decrès's command. Some idea of the First Consul's difficult position is indicated by the British Ambassador's dispatch of December 20:³³ "*Such is the penury of the Government that it does not possess the means of sending out even the necessary reinforcements for St. Domingo, and it has only been within these very few days that those means have been very scantily supplied by extorting different sums from the bankers of Paris.*" And on January 14, 1803, he reported to Lord Hawkesbury "that which seems now to occupy the attention of this Government to the exclusion of almost every other object, is the providing of reinforcements for St. Domingo."³⁴

When it became apparent that Victor would be delayed, it was decided to send Prefect Laussat on in advance. Exactly a week after he had been told to proceed to Helvoët Sluys he received the following order from Decrès: "The First Consul thought it to the interest of the expedition that you should precede it on one of the state boats in order to make all the necessary preparations for receiving it."³⁵ Laussat sailed from La Rochelle January 10, 1803, on board the *Surveillant*, accompanied by the chief of the engineering battalion,³⁶ and carrying a letter accrediting him to the Marquis of Sommeruelos, Captain General of Cuba.³⁷ The boat touched at Santander, where Laussat received the orders of the Spanish Government for the

33. Lord Whitworth to Lord Hawkesbury, Dec. 20, 1802, in Oscar Browning, *England and Napoleon in 1803* (London, 1887), p. 29.

34. Lord Whitworth to Lord Hawkesbury, Jan. 14, 1803, *ibid.*, p. 44.

35. Decrès to Laussat, 16 Frimaire, An XI [Dec. 7, 1802], AN, CF^{13A} 54 Colonies.

36. *Ibid.*

37. Decrès to the Marquis of Sommeruelos, 16 Frimaire, An XI [Dec. 7, 1802], AC, No.

42. (Sommeruelos is here incorrectly addressed as "Capitaine Général de la Louisiane pour S. M. C." Actually he was the "Captain General of Cuba" with Louisiana under his jurisdiction.)

Louisiana authorities and a sum of money for St. Domingo. After stopping at the Azores and at Cap Français, the *Surveillant* came within sight of Balize on March 11 after a good voyage. Once in Louisiana, Laussat began a voluminous correspondence with the Spanish officials³⁸ and prepared for Victor's arrival, at which time Spain was to deliver the Colony to France. Laussat's energy was indeed commendable despite the fact that it led to difficulties with the Louisiana officials. He built barracks, bought supplies, and assiduously studied the military position and needs of the Colony.

Meanwhile, the expedition for which he was preparing experienced various vicissitudes in Holland. That the French Government intended Victor to follow Laussat almost immediately is indicated by the letter to Sommerueles which spoke of the Captain General as ready to depart. In December, Bonaparte occupied himself especially with the Louisiana force. On December 19, 1802, Victor received orders from both Decrès and Napoleon ordering him to depart immediately and outlining the course he was to pursue in the Colony.³⁹

"It is urgent, Citizen General, that the Louisiana expedition depart as soon as possible," Decrès wrote. "In the first place, on account of the interest that the Government places in the prompt occupation of this important Colony by troops of the Republic, and especially because it is to be feared that the ice will surprise the convoy and

38. This correspondence is in Legajo 220, Papales Procedentes de Cuba, in the Archivo General de Indias, at Seville.

39. Decrès to General Victor, 28 Frimaire, An XI [Dec. 18, 1802], AC, No. 42; this letter is an almost *verbatim* reproduction of the instructions which Napoleon prepared for Victor on Dec. 16 and enclosed in his letter of 28 Frimaire, An XI [Dec. 18, 1802], to Decrès; *Correspondance de Napoléon I^{er}*, VIII, 185.

indefinitely delay its sailing. In consequence, I am sending the last orders of the Government to Captain Topsent⁴⁰ in order that nothing may further delay his getting under sail."

In a letter of the same date Napoleon enclosed the following order which was to be delivered to Victor only when he reached Cap Français: "*The extraordinary news which arrives at this time from the Cap [i.e. St. Domingo] oblige the Government to order the 54th to disembark there and to pass under the orders of Captain General Leclerc. You will continue your expedition with the 1,800 or 2,000 men that remain. A month, at the latest, after your arrival you will receive 2,000 men, who have the order of embarkation and who will replace the 54th in Louisiana.*"⁴¹ On the same day, Leclerc was instructed to coöperate with Victor.⁴²

Despite the apparent anxiety for Victor's departure, the Captain General found the necessary preparations far from complete. On December 22, 1802, he estimated that two or three weeks would be necessary to bring the supplies from Dunkirk and to complete the repairs on the vessels.⁴³ He, too, feared the sudden approach of cold weather.⁴⁴ However, eleven of the twelve vessels were soon in port and only part of the food supplies from Dunkirk and one hundred cords of wood from Antwerp were wanting.⁴⁵ But the delays proved disastrous, for during part of January and all of February Victor's force was icebound.⁴⁶ It would be impossible to determine the debt of the United

40. The naval commander of the Louisiana expedition.

41. To Decrès, 28 Frimaire, An XI [Dec. 19, 1802], *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, VIII, 185.

42. Decrès to Leclerc, 28 Frimaire, An XI [Dec. 19, 1802], AN, CF^{13A} 51 Colonies.

43. Victor to Decrès, 1 Nivôse, An XI [Dec. 22, 1802], *ibid.*

44. Victor to Decrès, 3 Nivôse, An XI [Dec. 24, 1802], *ibid.*

45. Victor to Decrès, 7 Nivôse, An XI [Dec. 28, 1802], *ibid.*

46. Livingston to Madison, Feb. 5, 1803, *Annals of Congress 1802-1803*, p. 1073.

States to the cold of Holland, but it is very probable that the ice of the Netherlands in the winter of 1803 rendered the United States a favor comparable, in some small degree, to that which the Channel winds have often bestowed on the British Isles. Had it not been for the ice of January and February, Victor would have sailed for Louisiana, and the effective military occupation of New Orleans might have changed the subsequent destiny of the Mississippi Valley. These two months were France's golden opportunity for effecting the occupation. Spain's objections had been overcome, the preparations were nearly complete, and there was little sign of hostility with England.

Early in February there was a period of warm weather in Paris, and Decrès, hoping for the same in Holland, urged Victor to depart.

"I am writing everyone in order to hasten the departure," the Minister wrote. "If all the troops cannot leave together, I order, in accordance with the instructions of the First Consul, that 2,800 or 3,000 men, who will suffice to take possession, be dispatched as quickly as possible Nothing is more pressing than your departure. I beg of you to neglect nothing to hasten it."⁴⁷

Napoleon, himself, apparently ignorant of the state of the weather in Holland, cancelled the orders diverting part of the troops to St. Domingo and directed Victor to go straight to his destination,⁴⁸ but the French transports remained icebound in Helvoët Sluys.

When spring came, a more serious factor intervened, and the beginning of the end of the Louisiana expedition

47. Decrès to General Victor, 14 Pluviôse, An XI [Feb. 3, 1803], AC, No. 42.

48. To Decrès, 14 Pluviôse, An XI [Feb. 3, 1803], *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, VIII, 252.

was in sight. Talleyrand wrote to Beurnonville that the English were blockading the ships of the expedition off the coast of Holland.⁴⁹ The same opinion was shared by the Government of the United States,⁵⁰ and the fact can hardly be questioned, in view of the very cordial relations that existed between Rufus King, the Minister of the United States at London, and Lord Hawkesbury, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. In reply to Talleyrand's charge, Lord Hawkesbury evaded the main question: "*With respect to the British vessels alleged to be cruising off the ports of the Batavian Republic [i.e. Holland] His Majesty has several ships of war in the seas adjacent to those ports; but if their commanders have made any movements or held any language which could be regarded as being of a hostile nature, their conduct has been in direct opposition to the tenor of their instructions.*"⁵¹

It is of the greatest importance in the history of Louisiana to determine just when Bonaparte ceased to interest himself in the departure of the expedition. The most likely date would seem to be early in March, 1803. The last record of any positive order from him relating to its departure was late in February.⁵² The speech of George III which referred to the suspicious nature of armaments in French and Dutch ports was delivered in Parliament on March 1. The day after its content was communicated to

49. Talleyrand to Beurnonville, 6 Germinal, An XI [March 27, 1803], AAE, L. et F., VII.

50. Madison to Livingston and Monroe, May 25, 1803, *Annals of Congress 1802-1803*, pp. 1154-56.

51. Lord Hawkesbury to Lord Whitworth, for delivery to Talleyrand, March 31, 1803, in Browning, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

52. Decrès to General Victor, 5 Ventôse, An XI [Feb. 24, 1803], AC, No. 42. Professor Marshall, relying on Lucien Bonaparte's *Mémoires* and a letter of Oct. 28, 1802, from Livingston to Jefferson, thinks Napoleon had decided to sell Louisiana before October 28. T. M. Marshall, *A History of the Western Boundary of the Louisiana Purchase, 1819-41* (Berkeley, 1914), pp. 3-4. But Napoleon's interest in the expedition in the winter of 1802-1803 makes the March, 1803, date more probable.

the French Government a reply was handed to Lord Whitworth, and Lord Hawkesbury showed a copy of this document to Rufus King. According to King, Bonaparte stated "that the expedition preparing in the Dutch ports was destined for America, as everyone knew, but, in consequence of the message it had been recalled and would not proceed."⁵³ This declaration, which Lord Hawkesbury strangely seemed to regard as friendly toward England,⁵⁴ was really made in earnest, for Napoleon had begun to think of using these troops in an attack on the British Isles.

Though Napoleon now pursued a course in direct conflict with his colonial program he did not interfere with the preparations of Decrès. The Minister of the Navy continued to cope with the countless difficulties that afflicted the ill-fated expedition. In April, a violent storm damaged several of the vessels and necessitated a two weeks delay. The troops had been embarked and were on the point of departure when a courier arrived at full speed announcing the sale of Louisiana to the United States.⁵⁵ Napoleon either had acted very suddenly in selling the Colony or had allowed the preparations to continue with the idea of influencing the United States. Although negotiations with the latter Power had been begun early in April, Decrès was not told to stop the expedition until the treaty had been signed.⁵⁶

Considerable money was spent in equipping Victor's forces, and, in view of the difficulties of the French Treas-

53. Rufus King to Madison, March 17, 1803, *House Document No. 92* (Washington, 1903), p. 146.

54. Lord Hawkesbury to Lord Whitworth, March 31, 1803, in Browning, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

55. Villiers du Terrage, *op. cit.*, p. 383.

56. Decrès to General Victor, 13 Floréal, An XI [May 3, 1803], AC, No. 42.

ury, such an expenditure indicates the value attached to Louisiana by the government. The cost of gathering and supplying the troops was 814,334.20 francs, and, in addition, 215,415.45 francs were spent at Paris.⁵⁷ Of the 884,500 francs set aside for local expenses in Louisiana, 215,066.25 francs remained in the hands of Laussat after the cession of the Colony to the United States.⁵⁸ These three items total 1,699,183.40 francs, and they do not include the hire of the boats. The original freight bill was 468,-235 francs,⁵⁹ but it is uncertain just how much of it was paid. In any case the grand total expenditure for the expedition must have touched 2,000,000 francs.

One other question arises in connection with the expedition at Helvoët Sluys. Did Bonaparte employ Louisiana as an excuse for his occupation of Holland, which he had bound himself to evacuate by the Treaty of Lunéville? Fournier, for instance, speaks of the troops' remaining there "under the pretext of being destined for Louisiana."⁶⁰ But the organization of the expedition was not a sham to cover the violation of the Treaty of August 29, 1801. Helvoët Sluys was chosen as the place of embarkation because available troops were in Holland.⁶¹ As there were some 11,000 men in the army of occupation in Holland⁶² and as it was well known that the transports for Louisiana had space for only 3,000, at the most, it is difficult to understand why Bonaparte should have bothered with attempting such an obvious deception. In other words, the army in

57. Report of Thirend, Naval Commissioner at Antwerp, 12 Messidor, An XI [July 1, 1803], AN, CF13A 54 Colonies.

58. The Minister of the Treasury (Barbé-Marbois) to Decrès, *ibid.*

59. "Montant du fret des batiments," *ibid.*

60. A. Fournier, *Napoléon I* (London, 1912), I, 300.

61. *Correspondance de Napoléon I^{er}*, VII, 617-18.

62. Fournier, *op. cit.*, I, 300.

Holland was large enough both to occupy Holland and to furnish a source of men for the projected expedition to Louisiana.

No matter how Europe regarded the Louisiana expedition, there was at least one Power in the world which saw in it a serious threat to its economic liberty and national well-being. The United States viewed with much misgiving the plan to plant the tricolor at the mouth of the Mississippi.